

# Sea ice: More than just frozen water

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## [Sea ice: More than just frozen water](#)

by Elizabeth Hunke and Andrew Roberts

Looking like plates, sheets and mounds of fractured alabaster on a surface of shimmering blue, sea ice is more than a beautiful phenomenon — it influences Earth's climate, wildlife and the people who must contend with it year-round.

Earth's polar oceans are cold enough that it's possible to walk on seawater turned to ice. About 9 million square miles of ice rest on top of the world's high-altitude seas and oceans.

Long ago, frequented by just a few rugged groups living in the high north, the polar regions are now home to more people than ever, with interests that range across commercial shipping; mining and energy development; recreational fishing; hunting and tourism; scientific research; and military bases and defense operations.

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